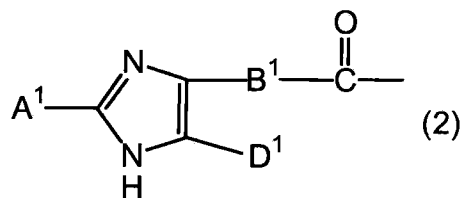
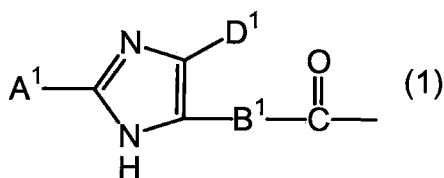


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

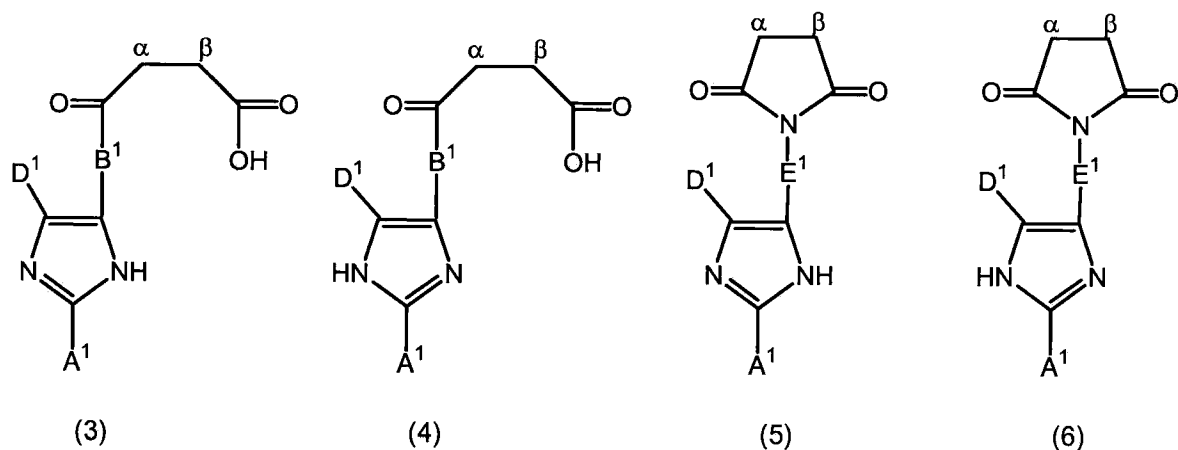
1. (Original) A thermoplastic elastomer consists of an elastomeric polymer having, on side chains, carbonyl-containing groups and imidazole rings, which rings bear a hydrogen atom on a nitrogen atom and also bear an alkyl, aralkyl or aryl group.

2. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 1, wherein the side chains have a structure of formula (1) or (2) below



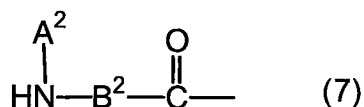
(wherein A¹ is an alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons; B¹ is a single bond, an oxygen, nitrogen or sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms; and D¹ is a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons, or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons).

3. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the side chains have a structure of any one of formulas (3) to (6) below which is bonded to a main chain at α or β position.



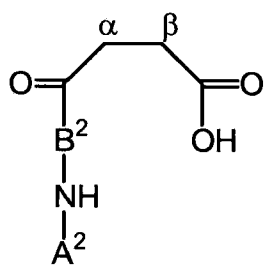
(wherein A¹ is an alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons; B¹ and E¹ are each independently a single bond, an oxygen, nitrogen or sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms; and D¹ is a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons).

4. (Original) A thermoplastic elastomer having side chains which contain a structure of formula (7) below

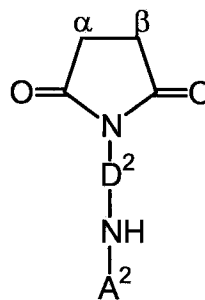


(wherein A² is an alkyl group of 1 to 30 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons; and B² is a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group).

5. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 4, wherein the side chains which include the structure of formula (7) have a structure of formula (8) or (9) below which bonds to a main chain at α or β position



(8)

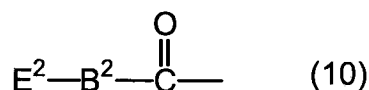


(9)

(wherein A^2 is an alkyl group of 1 to 30 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons, or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons; B^2 and D^2 are each independently a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group).

6. (Currently amended) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 4 or 5 which also has **[[a]]** nitrogen heterocycle-containing side chains.

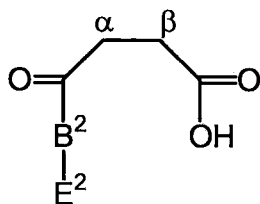
7. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer of claim 6, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle-containing side chains include a structure of formula (10) below



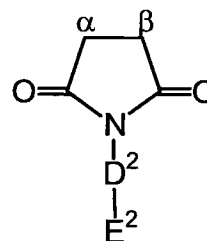
(10)

(wherein E^2 is a nitrogen heterocycle; and B^2 is a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group).

8. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 7, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle-containing side chains have a structure of formula (11) or (12) below which bonds to a main chain at α or β position



(11)



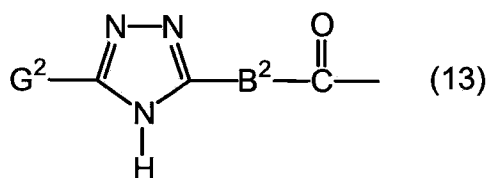
(12)

(wherein E^2 is a nitrogen heterocycle; and B^2 and D^2 are each independently a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group).

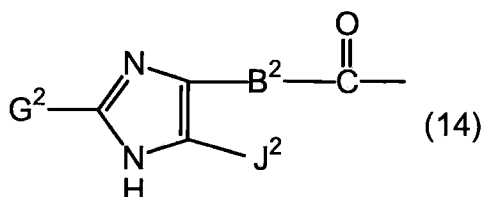
9. (Currently amended) The thermoplastic elastomer according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 6 ~~[[to 8]]~~, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle is a five- or six-membered ring.

10. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomerr according to claim 9, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle is a triazole ring, a thiadiazole ring, a pyridine ring or an imidazole ring.

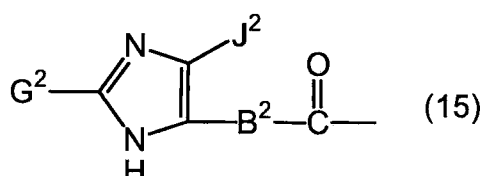
11. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 7, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle-containing side chains have a structure of formula (13), (14) or (15) below



(13)



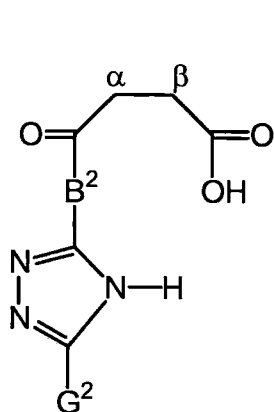
(14)



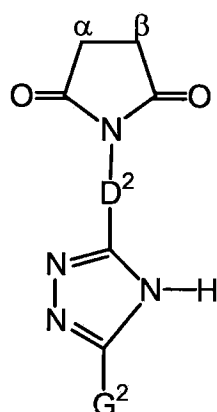
(15)

(wherein B^2 is a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group; and G^2 and J^2 are each independently a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group of 1 to 30 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons, or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons).

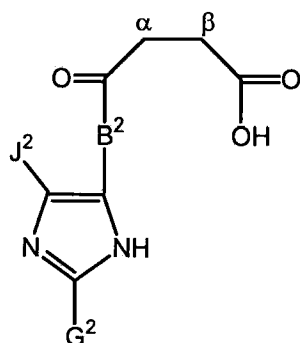
12. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 11, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle-containing side chains have a structure of formula (16) or (17) or any one of formulas (18) to (21) below which bonds to a main chain at α or β position



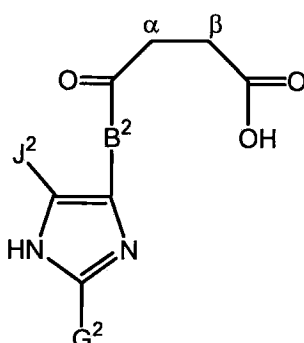
(16)



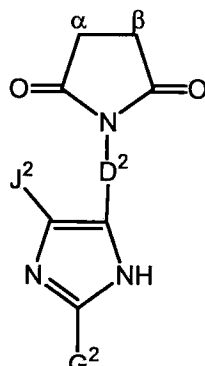
(17)



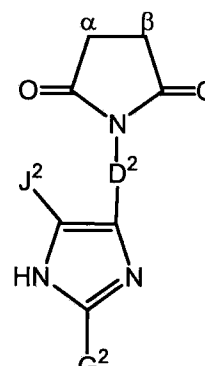
(18)



(19)



(20)



(21)

(wherein B² and D² are each independently a single bond, an oxygen atom, an amino group NR' (R' being a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbons), a sulfur atom, or an organic group which may include these atoms or group; and G² and J² are each independently a hydrogen atom, an alkyl group of 1 to 30 carbons, an aralkyl group of 7 to 20 carbons, or an aryl group of 6 to 20 carbons).

13-14. (Cancelled).

15. (Currently amended) A thermoplastic elastomer composition which includes the thermoplastic elastomer according to ~~any one of claims~~ claim 1 to 12 or 4.

16. (Original) The thermoplastic elastomer composition according to claim 15 which additionally includes from 1 to 200 parts by weight of carbon black and/or silica per 100 parts by weight of the thermoplastic elastomer.

17. (New) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 7, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle is a five- or six-membered ring.

18. (New) The thermoplastic elastomer according to claim 8, wherein the nitrogen heterocycle is a five- or six-membered ring.